THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. II. May 29, 1936 Sivan 8, 5696 No. 8

EDITORIALS

THE "CHRISTIAN CENTURY" PROBLEM

IN REPLY TO MR. LEWISOHN

DIPLOMACY AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

by Solomon Grayzel

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE JEWISH RELIGION

by Robert Gordis

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In view of the fact that, in certain quarters, THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST attitude toward Americanism has been misinterpreted and misrepresented, the editors have deemed it necessary to add to their platform a statement which would articulate what they have hitherto expressed in other forms in their various writings. The following formulation of this attitude adds nothing to their previously published platform; it merely makes more explicit what the editors have always maintained:

"As American Jews we give first place in our lives to the American civilization which we share in common with our fellow-Americans, and we seek to develop our Jewish heritage to the maximum degree consonant with the best in American life. Deprecating all forms of social segregation as detrimental to human welfare, we want so to enrich the Jewish individuality as to enable it to preserve itself without recourse to artificial barriers to social and cultural interaction. In living Judaism as a civilization we expect our Americanism and American life generally to be enhanced through the reenforcement of the noble strivings which have gone into the making of the American civilization. We deem it entirely compatible with the organic law of our country and with its highest ideals so to foster our Jewish tradition that it may maintain its vitality, and contribute to the enrichment of our personalities."

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EDITORIALS

The "Christian Century" Problem

A SHOCKING and ominous editorial appeared in the April 29th issue of the Christian Century. This journal, usually liberal and truly tolerant in its views, suddenly assumed a new tone. The editorial proposes to get at the "roots" and to examine the "realities" of "The Jewish Problem"; the result is nothing less than a threat to those who subscribe to the philosophy of Judaism expounded in THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST and set forth fully in "Judaism As A Civilization." Dr. Louis L. Mann, in the issue of May 13th, answers many of the charges made in the sinister editorial; but the editors assure him, in the same issue of May 13th, that their attack is not directed against the Reformist Jews, but against "a movement in Judaism, a modern movement, whose thesis is that Judaism is not merely a religion but a nationality, a civilization."

What is the substance of the attack? Briefly it is this, that so long as Jews regard themselves, and lead others to regard them, as unassimilable, they cannot expect to be tolerated. The editorial abounds in words like "interpenetration," "unity," "integration" and "the common life"; but the upshot is that Christians will not be satisfied unless they can hope that, at some future time, Jews will be completely absorbed. It is not easy, at once, to understand on what basis Reformists can be tolerated if they are avowedly opposed to assimilation; nor is it quite clear, at first blush, why the brunt of the attack was not directed against the Orthodox who, theoretically, should prefer death to baptism. It is only when the basic conception of religion which the Christian Century espouses is abstracted and boldly stated, that one can appreciate the real nature of their opposition to Reconstructionists who resist "interpenetration of the faiths."

At the basis of the Christian Century attack is a particular conception of religion. They believe that any religion, to be worthy of the name, must claim for itself the possession of Truth (with a capital T); a religion must, furthermore, contend that it is the *sole* possessor of that Truth; lastly, they believe that this Truth must be capable of universal application, and hence, ultimate universal acceptance. Every religion, from this point of view, must hope to absorb all other religions; for if it possesses the Truth, which can be applied universally, it must strive to get all people to accept that Truth—and to adopt that religion.

The conception of religion which lies at the basis of the philosophy of "Judaism as a civilization," is well summarized by the Christian Century editor when he writes: "The basis upon which this thesis

rests is the doctrine that Jewish religion is bound up indissolubly with its historic culture and that if the religion is to be kept alive the culture must be kept alive, and vice versa." The implications of this conception of religion are highly significant, and diametrically opposed to the fundamental position of the Christian Century. This conception of religion rejects the notion that there is a Truth (with a capital T), that any single group is in possession of it, or that it can be universally applied. Reconstructionism asserts that religions are the outgrowths of particular cultures or civilizations; and that, although they may partake of universal values these values are embodied in a variety of specific forms, corresponding to the variety of distinctive civilizations which happen to share those values.

Now we can understand better the burden of the editorial. Reformism, insofar as it regards itself as the bearer of a mission, claims the sole possession of a Truth, and seeks to convert the world to its beliefs. Orthodoxy, insofar as it believes that it possesses the supernaturally revealed Truth, is, in the Christian Century sense, a religion worthy of the name. Christianity, of course, has the necessary qualifications. As long as each religion attempts to conquer the rest, there is hope that, ultimately, the contest will end, and "unity" will be achieved; and tolerance is that forbearance which each contesting religion must suffer in relation to all the rest so that the contest may be carried on with the minimum of violence. But the Christian Century does not regard the Reconstructionists as truly religious, because they deny that there is a contest, or that there should be a contest; to those who are out of the game, "tolerance" does not apply.

Let us see exactly where this line of argument leads us. Firstly, we are confronted with the fact that the Christian Century sets itself up as the sole arbiter on the question of what is and what is not religion. This implies that the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion is to be interpreted to apply only within the limits of the Christian Century definition of religion. The argument leads, secondly, to the conclusion that such freedom of religion, or "tolerance," is not to be understood as a permanent institution, but one that must terminate with the ultimate triumph of one or another religion. Thirdly, it means that there is to be no tolerance for those who seek self-fulfillment outside the realm of the defined limits of authorized "religion." In other words, the right to cultivate a distinctive culture is denied unless that culture is indissolubly bound up with a proselytizing religion.

We submit, therefore, that the Christian Century editorial constitutes a threat not only to us, the religious-culturists, but also to all Jews who wish to preserve and advance Jewish cultural life on a purely secular basis. It is a blow at the Yiddishists, the Hebraists, at all Jews and non-Jews, who resent this kind of religious totalitarianism, this Christian version of *Gleichschaltung*. For our part, we are prepared to defend what we believe to be the only legitimate conception of tolerance, one based upon mutual respect and the mutual acknowledgment of cultural rights. We hope that those who, sharing our views and understanding the issue as it has here been drawn, will not meekly display the white feather at this evidence of non-Jewish disapproval. Jews who have cherished vital beliefs have not been intimidated for centuries; let us not be intimidated by the Christian Century.

In Reply To Mr. Lewisohn

IN an editorial entitled "Religion and Social Action" which appeared in a recent issue of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST the point was made that most ministers and rabbis today have not received in their seminaries "the kind of sociological training necessary to qualify them to cope with the problems of economic justice," and that this constituted one of the rea-

sons why "religion is not functioning normally today."

The implied claim in this editorial that the Church and Synagogue ought to be more concerned with questions of social import and with programs of social action was commented upon unfavorably by Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn. For, as against changing the form and structure of society, Mr. Lewisohn contends that "there is no change that matters but an inner change in the individual." To be sure, this inner change must be "metaphysically grounded and affirmed," but the essential thing to be striven after is "goodness of will in the individual." When individuals in society will acquire a good will, then we will have a good society.

Armed with this major premise, Mr. Lewisohn deprecates "direct sociological and economic tinkering" on the part of ministers and rabbis, and he urges them to practise and to cultivate in their congregants the virtues of "detachment and contemplativeness," of meditative inquiry into the nature of man and in the quality and beauty of the ideals of Justice, Mercy and Peace. Such contemplation will convince us that "we do not know exactly what is social or economic justice," and so Mr. Lewisohn maintains that it is a "kind of idolatry" on our part to clamor for social action or to have faith in transforming society through "machine, institutions and contrivances."

Mr. Lewisohn's argument sounds plausible to one who accepts his major premise, but is shockingly naive and dangerous to one who does not. For Mr. Lewisohn not only reiterates the thoroughly un-Jewish belief in the independence and primacy of the inner life of man, but he fails to reckon with the major facts of our modern era, namely, the shifting of the center of gravity from the inner life of the individual to the impersonal forces of the modern industrial community. Only in a very limited sense can the individual today make significant decisions. It was different in a simple agricultural or feudal economy or in the "rugged individualism" stage of capitalist economy. Every local community was then relatively self-sufficient, and the individuals composing it were in a large measure free agents whose actions, when motivated by "goodness of will," counted for something toward creating "a good society."

However, the situation is wholly different today. As Prof. Reinhold Niebuhr has so eloquently made clear in his classic volume "Moral Man and Immoral Society," the individual in modern urbanized, industrialized society falls victim to a host of impersonal forces which he cannot personally control. In an internationally-interdependent competitive, profit-seeking society, it is folly to imagine that individual good-will can accomplish much good in significant areas of social relationship. An employer, for instance, may entertain nothing but good-will toward his employees, but so long as he is controlled, as an employer, by the fluctuations in the international market and by the wage-scales paid by competitors, he must continue to exploit his workers or else be ruined.

No more change of heart or inner conversion can be of much help today in ushering in "a good society." The informed capitalist understands that; so does the class-conscious worker. They are each conscious of the fact that they belong to a class or social group which expresses their interests, and that salvation for themselves can best be achieved through cooperation with their economic class. As individuals they are well-nigh powerless, but as members of a class they are fairly powerful and can help make significant decisions. This alignment into classes and the conflict that ensues from the clash of interests is, of course, commonly known as the class-struggle.

Mr. Lewisohn, however, is not a member either of the exploiting, owning class, or of the exploited working class. He is a member of the middle-class, and as such exhibits the illusions typical of that class. To begin with, he has no strong sense of belonging to any economic class. He lives

in a world where the physical basis of life is sufficiently secure and the collective goals of society sufficiently remote to give him the illusion of individual independence. He is therefore led to believe (though he would probably deny the class-roots of this belief) that social harmony or the good life would be established on earth if only all men would love each other, i.e., exhibit proper good-will.

It is also because of his failure to come to grips with his class-position in society and his own relative comfort that Mr. Lewisohn can afford to advocate the luxury of "detachment and contemplativeness." We do not deny that these virtues are necessary in the functioning of any vital religion, but to elevate them to a position of primacy in these days of needless mass-misery and destitution, and to take refuge in a world of esthetic mysticism as does Mr. Lewisohn, is to betray a desire to escape from sharing responsibility for the sordid realities of the temporal world. To be sure, Mr. Lewisohn being a sensitive person, finds it necessary to salve his conscience, so he rationalizes this escape by declaring that "The realities of God's world are deeper than the specific problems of any age or the specific wrongs of any given society." (This should be of great comfort to the fifteen million unemployed, the millions of undernourished children, and the millions of underpaid wage-workers!)

While we cannot deny that every problem is a religious problem in its highest reaches, the fact remains that in the modern impersonal, industrial world, where classes and social groups are in eternal conflict with one another, justice is only partly the consequence of individual moral intention or good-will, and largely the product of adequate instruments and mechanisms of social control. That is why religious leaders today must be informed by a *social* vision of a righteous world, and that is why in order to be effective they must advocate a program of *social* action to match it. It is interesting to note that the Prophets of the Bible did no less. Theirs too, was the religion of individual and *collective* action in specific situations as these arose in their lifetime, though their pronouncements were guided and inspired by a vision of a God who, while grounded in the world of nature and man, nevertheless transcended it.

In the Talmudic tract *Kiddushin* (40b) we read,—"Which is greater, Study or Action? Rabbi Tarphon answered that Action is greater; Rabbi Akiba replied Study is greater. It was finally agreed that Study is greater because Study leads to Action." To Mr. Lewisohn in his middle-class comfort and contentment, Study may lead to detached contemplation. To a modern religious leader, worthy of the name, however, Study must lead to a program of social action.

Diplomacy and Jewish Survival

By Solomon Grayzel*

AN ugly fact is staring us in the face. It is that in every part of the world the status of the Jew is becoming more difficult. This is all the more devastating in view of the situation which obtained a few years ago, soon after the conclusion of the War. At that time the efforts of the Jews seem to have succeeded in laying the foundations for a more hopeful future. Jewish rights were recognized in Palestine, and an honorable status was assigned to the Jews of Eastern Europe. In America an anti-Jewish movement was laughed out of court. Everywhere an era of good feeling toward the Jews gave promise of a speedy end to that sense of insecurity which had been haunting the Jewish subconsciousness. Within a decade,

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however, all this has changed. There is no need to repeat the saddening details of the present state of affairs with regard to the British attitude toward Palestine, the world's attitude toward Jewish minority rights, or the attitude of the western Gentile toward his Jewish neighbor. No wonder that the Jew has begun to mistrust his leaders and to doubt himself.

Innumerable attempts have been made in the last few years to discover the reason for this change in the Jewish situation. These analyses have not been purely academic. There is always the hope that having discovered the causes for the reaction we shall be able to do something to counteract it. To be sure, in almost every land, organizations have been in existence for some time whose task it is to solve such problems. These organizations have not resigned their task. It is natural, however, that their approach to the problem and their methods should be criticized by those who are impatient for more effective action. It is understandable that in their uneasiness over the gathering clouds above them, and in their great disappointment at their inability to intercede for those of other lands about whom the storm is already raging, the Jews should seek newer methods of making the Jewish future more secure.

I

On the whole, the Jews have shown a fair amount of diplomatic ability. "Diplomatists," one of them complains, "unlike soldiers, are not as a rule the spoilt children of historians."[1] The complaint is certainly justified when we consider the first half of Jewish history. In Jewish historical and legalistic literature diplomats are treated with silence or outright condemnation. Prophet and scribe had no use for diplomatic activity. Concerned as they were with the creation of a "holy people," they viewed with unmitigated dislike the frantic efforts of the little Hebrew states to play the diplomatic game. Then, as now, the ethics of diplomacy could not have been very high. Besides, an alliance with a foreign power meant expressions of respect for its immoral and unrighteous gods, and an admission of the superiority of the physical over the spiritual. Thus Elijah fought against the alliance with Tyre, and all the other Prophets against the natural alliance between the Hebrews and Egypt. Yet, greatly as we may admire the lofty stand of the Prophets, we should not be blind to the fact that the diplomatic activity which they opposed is the natural consequence of statehood. In order to maintain national existence there was nothing else for the kingdoms of Israel and Judah to do but try to maintain the balance of power in the world about them. In the days of Jeremiah, Judah was the Belgium of the ancient world. It is to the credit of the Israelitish and Judaean diplomats that these two little states succeeded in keeping themselves alive as long as they did.

We are confronted by a similar disparagement of diplomatic activity on the part of the great teachers of Judaism during the latter part of the Second Commonwealth. Even more than David, who established Hebrew independence during the earlier period, Jonathan the Hasmonean, by consummate diplomatic skill, laid the foundations for complete Jewish independence during the later age. His Hasmonean successors continued his policy. But their Pharisaic opponents, consistent with their strictly religious point of view, had no appreciation of such a policy. It is only in recent years that Hasmonean diplomacy has begun to be evaluated from the angle of statesmanship and its requirements.[2] When that is done, the diplomatic ability of the Jews becomes evident once more.

It has generally been to the Middle Ages that the Jews have turned with justifiable pride for proof of the people's diplomatic ability. During the centuries before diplomacy became the restricted

[1] Jules Cambon, *The Diplomatist*, p. 36.

[2] A. Tcherikower, *Hayehudim v'Hayevanim*, pp. 254f. J. Klausner, *Historiya Yisreelith*, vol. II., pp. 230-231.

field of the aristocratic classes, numerous princes chose Jews for their official and unofficial advisers. The achievements of these Jewish diplomats for the prince and the land they represented form what the late Lucien Wolf [3] called "a creditable record" for Jewish skill in that direction. There come to mind the names of Hasdai ibn Shaprut, Samuel ha-Naggid, the Abarbanels, Joseph Nassi, and a host of others even in more northern lands whose existence is known though their names have been forgotten. As one reason for the diplomatic skill of the Jews during the Middle Ages, Lucien Wolf offered the likelihood that their own circumstances developed in the Jews the qualities of good negotiators. In view of the facts pointed out above, that the Jews did not fall below any others in diplomatic ability even during the first half of their history, it is hardly necessary to assume that diplomatic skill was a newly developed characteristic of the medieval Jew. It may, indeed, have been sharpened by Jewish experience, but essentially it was never lacking.

II

It was inevitable that the Jews should need this diplomatic skill. Diplomacy has been defined as "the art of representing states and conducting negotiations." Its aim is presumed to be the maintenance of peaceful relations between nations. In the ordinary, narrow sense of this definition of diplomacy the Jews, not being organized into a state, could not have carried on any diplomatic activity of their own. But the society of the past, even more so than at present, was organized largely upon religious lines. This forced a dual status upon the Jews, making of them a social unit within a larger socio-political unit. As a separate entity within each land they had to regulate their relations with their fellow-citizens, and, therefore, were frequently called upon to conduct negotiations. The problem of maintaining peace between themselves and their neighbors was an ever-present and ever-pressing one. In a real sense, diplomacy, though unadorned by the usual diplomatic etiquette, has been a factor in Jewish life.

It is easy enough to judge of the success or failure of the diplomacy of the ordinary state because the aims of its policy are clear. To say that these aims are the maintenance of peace is to idealize the diplomatic game. A diplomat wants peace, but only on his own terms, that is he wants the kind of peace that will redound to the advantage of his master or his country. It is not so easy to decide what is to be considered successful diplomacy among the Jews. During the last eighteen hundred years the diplomacy of the Jews certainly did not aim to obtain any advantage over the Gentiles. At most it aimed at peace and equality with them. Even that was too much to expect during long periods of the Jewish past. When religious fanaticism was at fever heat, any Jewish diplomat who obtained no more than a guarantee of security must be considered to have scored a great victory. Overwhelmed by the memory of the unjust treatment accorded the Jews during the age since the definite victory of the Christian Church, we tend to overlook the pertinent fact that this victorious antagonist did not succeed in eradicating the Synagogue. The same may be said about the relations between the Jews and the Mohammedans. Mere survival must be accounted as also a diplomatic triumph. One may look upon this as a sad commentary upon religion and humanity, but from the point of view of Jewish policy it must be considered realistically, and the value of the men and the factors involved in Jewish diplomacy judged accordingly.

Three types of diplomats represented the Jews during as many periods of Jewish history. The first was the royal favorite. His was primarily the feudal age, when government was based to a large extent upon personal relationships, when

[3] Lucien Wolf, *Essays in Jewish History*, ed. by Cecil Roth, p. 386.

economic consciousness was dim, and the emotion of nationalism practically non-existent. The guide of government was the will of the ruler, and royal power depended upon royal strength, martial and financial. The king picked his advisers from any group. Their only qualification was that they were men who gave promise of increasing his personal power. The fact of being a Jew did not stand in a man's way, since the prince who chose him as financial adviser or physician or diplomatic representative, was responsible to neither the church nor the people. Nevertheless, this Jew's position was in greater jeopardy than that of any other royal favorite. Upon this Jew devolved the additional task of representing the interests of the Jewish group. Sometimes the prince placed him in charge of his co-religionists; more frequently the Jews themselves asked this strategically-placed brother to represent them and their cause. His was the task of persuading the ruler that his best interests lay in making Jewish life secure. Usually this worked well. The chief danger in this use of the favorite to forward the ends of Jewish diplomacy was that the fortunes of the Jews became intimately tied up with the fortunes of this individual Jew. His fall from grace meant suffering by the entire community. At other times too much reliance was placed upon the power of the prince. Joseph, son of Samuel ha-Naggid, brought misfortune upon himself and his fellow-Jews of Granada by failing to take into account the sentiments of the Gentile population.

III

By the age of the Renaissance the situation changed. Princely power now rested on the securer bases of economics and national feeling. These factors had to be taken into consideration, and the pursuit of a personal policy was no longer possible. The horizon of government expanded, and in line with that expansion diplomacy underwent a change. This was the period when kings began to send permanent residents to the courts of their neighbors. The transformation reacted most unfavorably upon Jewish diplomacy. The entire population had to be won over, but the Jews could deal only with the central government which had now become more conscious of the sentiments of the population. The kings ceased to have Jewish favorites, and the Jews had to send more or less permanent representatives to the court. It was pre-eminently the age of the *Shtadlan.*

This state of affairs lasted till the nineteenth century, the century of conscious economic evolution. It is not surprising that the Jew who stood high in economic achievement assumed at this time the burden of representing the under-privileged Jewish group. This type of Jewish representative had more in common with the favorite Jew of the first period than with the *Shtadlan* of the second, not only because in both cases the selection was made by non-Jewish influences, but also because the diplomacy of both rested upon similar foundations, namely the Jewish contribution to strength.

For diplomacy rests upon two pillars, the personality of the diplomat, and the means which he has at hand for attaining his goal. Popular belief credits the official and unofficial Jewish diplomats with whatever success Jewish diplomacy attained during the always difficult times of the Jewish past. These men are said to have known how to work upon the kindliness and good sense of princes and ecclesiastics gifted with such qualities. These diplomats are supposed to have known how to use gold judiciously. They, therefore, are generally supposed to have stayed whatever expulsions have been stayed, and avoided whatever massacres and oppressions have been spared the Jewish people.

With much of this popular belief there can be no quarrel. One thinks of the quiet activity of Yehiel, a trusted employee of the Pope during the days of the Third Lateran Council (1179), and of his apparent success in obviating various evil decrees. One thinks of the indefatigable

Jossel von Rossheim in the sixteenth century, using brains, charm, and money in defense of German Jewry. One recalls the wild dash from Prague to Rome of Mordecai Zemah (c. 1560) to obtain from the Pope the annulment of an oath taken by the Emperor to expel the Jews from Prague. Such instances on a smaller or larger scale could be multiplied by the hundreds, and they lend color to the supposition that Jewish diplomacy depended largely upon the personality of the Jewish diplomat, his resources and resourcefulness. Indeed, the like emphasis upon diplomatic personalities holds of diplomacy in general. That is why diplomats are not elected, even in democracies. The United States is the exception that proves the rule. For, whereas until now, while its eyes were turned inward, the United States created diplomats by the magic wand of party loyalty, now that it must peer beyond its own horizon, the tendency in this country is also toward "career diplomats," who may add to an innate inclination whatever they learn in the hard school of experience. The custom among nations of appointing as their representatives only *persona grata*, an acceptable man, to represent them at another nation's capital, further indicates the importance of personality in the diplomatic game. Certainly the Jews of the past had to and did take care that those who represented them were capable and acceptable. Otherwise, the Jewish lot would have been far worse than it was.

It is, therefore, somewhat surprising to find the very people who point to these Jewish diplomats with pride, pointing to their diplomacy with shame. The term *Shtadlanus* is commonly applied to the methods used by these men. All the bitterness of the *galut*, the full force of the Jewish feeling of dependence upon the whim of a tyrannical master and of an even more tyrannical mob, a sense of degradation accumulated through centuries, has been poured into that one word. The Jewish mind pictures the representative of the Jews slinking into the palace through the servants' entrance, braving the derision of the lowliest in the social scale, and, hat in one hand and bag of gold in the other, begging for the most elementary human rights. I submit that this picture is just neither to the Jewish diplomat nor to the Jewish people. Diplomacy has always and of necessity been secret, and therefore a back-door affair. "Open diplomacy" is a contradiction in terms, and has never been found practicable even during those years of the recent past when the League of Nations gave promise of success. In its very essence a process of bargaining in national interests, frequently touching upon what is called national honor, an emotion whose sensitiveness is directly proportional to the tarnish upon it, diplomacy has to carry on in private until the bargain is quite complete and both sides see what they are to receive for what they promise to give. It is easy to imagine what would have happened to Jewish populations, if it had become known that their representatives were negotiating for an amelioration of their conditions.

Moreover, at its worst *Shtadlanus* was characteristic of only one period of diaspora history, the period of the ghetto, and even for that sad period the usual picture is an exaggerated one. Jossel von Rossheim was a dignified figure when he appeared before Charles V, or in the court of the dukes and electors. Nor was there anything undignified in the efforts of Wolf Wertheimer (1745) to bring the influence of foreign governments to bear against Maria Theresa's decision to expel the Jews from Bohemia. The truth of the matter seems to be that we are somewhat ashamed of *Shtadlanus*, not because that type of Jewish diplomat lowered Jewish dignity by using the wrong methods, but because he used pleas instead of arguments. The modern Jew tends to forget that the *Shtadlan* had no other weapon. For the causes of the successes and failures of Jewish diplomacy were not so much the personality, ability, and methods of the Jewish diplomat, as the bargaining power possessed by the respective Jewish groups.

IV

A glance at the bases of general diplomacy might be helpful at this point. It is hardly necessary to say that diplomatic successes have never been won by appeals to justice, no matter if an appeal of this sort was occasionally found useful to supplement other forces backing up a diplomatic act. "Realistic diplomacy" may be a new phrase, but it is an old idea. Indeed, it is a pleonastic phrase, since diplomacy which is not realistic hardly deserves the name. The recent history of the League of Nations affords ample proof of this. To quote again from Cambon's little essay,[4] "Apart from its own strength, Providence and Justice are the only allies that a great nation requires." Note well that the first requisite is "its own strength." Diplomacy is possible without Providence and without Justice; it is utterly impossible without strength.

To make up for lack of strength nations frequently fall back upon alliances. "Balance of Power is another new phrase for a method as old as diplomacy itself. In order to gain further strength and thus equalize the balance or incline it in their favor, nations will make concessions and the strangest alliances. Popes have been known to ally themselves with Turks, and good capitalistic nations with dreaded Bolsheviks. In somewhat different terms, but with essentially the same intentions, intra-national groups have been known to ally themselves with one another. Sometimes a minority was sought after because of the strength which it might grant or withhold. The Huguenots during the sixteenth century, and the German-Catholics during the nineteenth may serve as illustrations. What was sought from these groups was additional economic and national power. As soon as they could be dispensed with from this point of view, they were discarded.

The diplomatic successes of the Jews in the pre-ghetto and post-ghetto periods, as well as the failures during the ghetto age, must be viewed from this angle. The victories cannot be explained purely on the basis of the close relationships formed by some Jews with their princes, or on the basis of the clever expedients used. Nor can the long defeat embodied in the ghetto be blamed exclusively upon religious and nationalist intolerance. The explanation for both victories and defeats can be found in the fact that the periods of comparative success or failure coincided with periods during which the corporate Jewries of the respective lands were considered indispensable or dispensable to the strength of those lands.

Completely to prove the above generalization one would have to write a social and economic history of the Jews during the past nineteen centuries. All that can be done here is to give a few illustrations. The first instance of the Jews' gaining comparative security in the face of highly unfavorable circumstances was during the first few centuries after the victory of the Christian Church. With that victory the bishops had risen to great influence in the court of the Empire. They would certainly have preferred to see Judaism completely abolished. Nevertheless, while serious restrictions were imposed upon Jewish life, Judaism was continued as a "legalized religion." What was it that so effectively counteracted ecclesiastical influence? Two factors seem to stand out.[5] One was economic. In the Empire in general, weakened as it was by many years of economic decline, the Jews played an important role as merchants and shippers. No emperor dared level a crushing blow at a group whose hands helped support the crumbling pillars of Roman strength. Another reason was purely physical. The Jews still formed a numerical group of some size within the Empire. They were still quite strong in Palestine. It was highly impolitic to risk a rebellion in a province so close to Persia, for the Jews had not yet stopped being a fighting population. It is not necessary

[4] *The Diplomatist*, p. 20.

[5] Cp. J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire Romain*, I., pp. 227-232; II., pp. 182-198.

to posit personal influence of individual Jews at the Imperial Court nor theological motives which were probably an afterthought; the two factors in the situation described above are sufficient explanation for the survival of the Jews beyond that period.

More in the nature of the balance of power principle was the condition of Jewish survival during the age of the Barbarian invasions. Arians in religion and few in number, these invaders of Italy and Spain needed whatever support they could obtain from the population which they found in these lands. Nowhere was the strength and weakness of the Jews as "balancers of power" better illustrated than in their history in seventh century Spain. The Visigoths then ruled the land where lived a predominantly Catholic population with a large admixture of Jews. The first generations of the invaders, feeling somewhat strange and insecure, protected and befriended the Jewish population. Toward the end of the sixth century, however, the Visigothic king sought to curb the traditional semi-independence of the Visigothic nobility. He allied himself with the Catholic clergy, and through them sought support from the masses. A political seesaw developed and lasted throughout the seventh century. On the one side were king and clergy; on the other was the local nobility supported by the economic power of the Jews. Both sides struggled for the favor of the masses. Council after council was held at Toledo, where the Catholic forces hurled bolts of destruction against the Jews. Although the local nobility protected them as frequently as they could, that nobility itself was apparently on the losing side. To turn the balance in their favor, they called in the Arabs from across the straits.

Thereafter, the history of the Jews in the Iberian Peninsula is the history of the balance of power between Christians and Mohammedans. This fact is amply proved by the instance when the Pope agreed that the Jews of Christian Spain in the thirteenth century be excused from wearing the Jewish badge. For the Jews had threatened to migrate to Mohammedan Spain and thereby strengthen the rivals of the Christian powers. No outstanding Jewish statesman achieved this great victory. On the other hand, two and a half centuries later, one of the greatest of Jewish statesmen, Isaac Abarbanel, though personally highly thought of by Ferdinand and Isabella, failed completely to have the Edict of Expulsion rescinded even though he used appeals to justice and to greed in order to save his people. The point is that the Jews were no longer needed; they had lost their economic and political importance as a strength-giving group.

Jewish experiences in other lands were similar. Everywhere their success or their failure to maintain themselves within the political organism was based upon the strength which they contributed to the individual prince or country. It was true of France in the days of Louis the Pious, in the ninth century, as it was of Poland in the days of Boleslav the Great, in the thirteenth. In both lands the kings protected them against the animosity of the clergy, and in both their position deteriorated along with their internal power. By the latter half of the fifteenth century, the movement toward the expulsion of the Jews from Christian society was in full swing. No diplomacy could save the Jews from the ghetto in the middle of the sixteenth century. Even if their economic position had been better, the fanaticism of Protestants and Catholics, who shed each others' blood, would have shut the Christian heart against the Jews. But the economic condition of the Jews was anything but good at the beginning of the ghetto age, and grew worse as time went on both in Central and Eastern Europe. The ghetto, therefore, became a permanent institution, to be destroyed only by a new political and economic age. As between the pre-ghetto and the ghetto periods, Jewish diplomacy was easy during the former; it was hopeless during the latter.

Further examples of the same condition

may be seen in the history of the Jews during the nineteenth century. Again there was a period of expanding economy in which the Jews played a leading role. The manner in which the Jews won their equality of civil status in Germany is instructive. They tried bargaining by means of their religion, using reform of worship and theology as a means to persuade their Gentile neighbors of their essential similarity. They tried an appeal to justice and idealism. Riesser and Kuranda should really have convinced anyone open to conviction. Yet what finally did win their fight for them was their alliance with winning capitalism as against decaying feudalism.

Occasionally Jewish diplomacy has won a victory by making use of international rivalries. It was true of the sixteenth century when the Turks faced Venice. At that time, highly-placed Jews of Turkey were able to compel a more favorable attitude toward its Jews on the part of the Venetian Republic. But that was due, at least in part, to the fact that expanding Turkey needed the added strength which the immigrant Jews brought to it from the West. Again during the nineteenth century the famous effort of Moses Montefiore actually freed the Jews from a ritual murder accusation. Even here, however, one may well ask whether Montefiore's appeal to human justice would have sufficed had it not been for two other factors: the rivalry for influence in the Levant between France and England, and an economically, and therefore politically strong Jewish community for whom Montefiore spoke.

Already during Montefiore's time the entire situation of the Jews, internally within their communities and externally, socially, politically, and economically, was undergoing a change. It was a change which inevitably reacted upon Jewish diplomacy. But that is a separate story and cannot be told at this time.

Granted that the course and foundation of Jewish life within non-Jewish political groups have been presented in a manner one-sided and over-simplified, nevertheless what has been said is sufficient to illustrate the general characteristics of Jewish diplomacy. What the above discussion has tried to make clear is that in the past the greatest security lay in the possession by the Jewish group of inner strength in every possible sense of that word, including the purely physical. We had diplomats; but we could not always provide them with the cards that would have enabled them to play anything but a losing hand in the diplomatic game. Perhaps the same is true of the present situation. If so, the business before us is urgent to strengthen the Jewish group in this land.

The Social Background of the Jewish Religion

By Robert Gordis*

I

In the present century, a noteworthy reaction against the extreme views of higher criticism has set in, due, in large measure, to the increasing importance of archaeology. The archaeologists, who have been busily at work in Egypt, Babylonia and Palestine, have silently been revealing much of the material substratum of Hebrew life and culture in the framework of the ancient East. At an increasing number of points, archaeological finds have reenforced Biblical traditions and records, which the higher critics had dismissed as myths and legends, without foundation in fact.

Coupled with the flood of light that archaeology has thrown on the material background of Hebrew history, a decided shift of interest has taken place from the purely literary analysis of sources

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to the investigation of the political, social, and economic conditions in ancient Israel. Louis Wallis published his "Sociological Study of the Bible" in 1912. Nine years later appeared Max Weber's suggestive and influential work on the social and economic background of the Jewish religion, entitled *"Das Antike Judentum."* Most of the studies in this field are scattered as monographs in the various scientific journals. Interestingly enough, Communist Jewish scholarship in Soviet Russia has also turned to the study of the Bible, largely as a vehicle for anti-religious propaganda. By and large, these students, like Luria, seem unable to forgive Moses and the Prophets for failing to usher in the dictatorship of the proletariat. Their extreme bias often renders their conclusions palpably absurd.

II

It is therefore a pleasure to welcome Louis Wallis' recent study "God and the Social Process.* The author's standpoint is perhaps the most interesting phase of the book, because it shows that the secular and the religious attitudes are not, as extreme partisans of the one or the other maintain, mutually exclusive, but on the contrary, complementary. He describes his book as a secular treatise on Jewish history, based on the cause-and-effect relationships fundamental to all natural and historical sciences. This thoroughly naturalistic approach does not rule out for him the cognition of the spiritual significance of history. Science reveals the relationship of facts; religion is concerned with the hierarchy of values. To quote the author: "The scientific scholar can have no quarrel with belief in a God who uses Hebrew history and world history for divine ends; and since the human spirit can work within the terms of natural laws which condition our bodily existence, there is no ground for saying that a higher personality is not active within the terms of what we call 'natural development.' The long evolution which resulted in the appearance of man upon the earth, and which has continued its course through the stupendous march of human history from the Stone Age until now, is a tragic drama which loses all point and purpose, if, in the background, there be no central Will imparting ultimate intelligibility to the vast process. And as man becomes more and more aware of his place in the cosmos, he will be forced either to rest upon the view that the universe is the home of God or to become increasingly conscious of alienation within the limits of his own thought." Thus the scientific interpretation of Jewish history is the key to its spiritual values.

Of equally commanding interest and value, is the fundamental thesis of the book, which by and large impresses the reader as helpful in revealing the dynamic of events. Briefly stated, it is that the struggle for monotheism against Baalism, which is recorded in the Bible, is more than a war between idols and the true God, as taught in the Sunday Schools, or between opposing conceptions of the fertilizing power in Nature, as maintained by Wellhausen and the critical school. Essentially it represents the conflict between the religious sanction of two hostile social systems.

The God whom the Hebrews brought with them from the desert validates the economic and social relationships of the nomad clan, where all property is held in common, so that all members of the clan are in the same economic class. The religion of the nomad, and of his successor, the early peasant, is opposed to the commercialistic practices of urban civilization, and is revolted at the sale and foreclosure of land, and the growth of monopolistic wealth and extreme poverty. It seems an affront to God in the degradation of a clan brother to slavery because of impoverishment and debt. It is true that communal ownership of wells and cattle has given way to the private ownership of farm lands, but the farmer still remains strongly equalitarian in spirit, as far as a brother Hebrew is concerned. Like all primitive clan morality, it was ready

*Chicago University Press, Chicago, Ill., 1935.

to countenance slavery among non-Hebrews, because it did not extend beyond the confines of the nation, until a later period. Baalism, on the other hand, the religion of the Amorite inhabitants of the walled cities of Palestine, reflects the commercial spirit of its environment. Baal itself means "owner," and it represents the wealthy owning class, the possessors of fields and slaves, the holders of notes and mortgages on the possessions of the poorer classes.

It was inevitable that these two standpoints should clash in a conflict that lasted throughout Hebrew history. Wallis points out that the struggle against other gods, and the struggle for justice in Biblical times are not two separate movements, but logically one and the same. The importance of the conflict does not lie in the particular social program enunciated by the Torah or advocated by the Prophets. This teaching, Wallis claims, was largely utopian, because it harked back to the nomadism of the desert, in which it saw the golden age of Israel's loyalty to God, remembered ever after as "the grace of Israel's youth, the love of her bridal state, when she followed after God in the wilderness, in a land unsown." The significance lies in the emergence in Prophetic thought, of the ideals of justice and freedom as the goals of a regenerated society, and in the courage to do battle and suffer martyrdom for their sake. By virtue of these aspirations, the details of Hebrew history achieve transcendental importance in the annals of human progress.

III

Wallis' thesis is highly stimulating, but it is unfortunate that he tends to oversimplify the nature of events. Granted that the war between the God of Israel and the Baalim had an important social basis, there is no need to deny that purely religious and national factors played an important role as well. The God of the Hebrews upon whose unity and incorporeality the Decalogue insists, was from the beginning more spiritualized than the Baalim, and his worship was far more exalted than the orgiastic rites of the Baal and Ashtoreth cults. Moreover, the one God represented the goal of a united people, while the Baalim fostered local divisions.

In recent years, great emphasis has rightly been laid upon the desert as a determining factor in Hebrew thought, not unlike the frontier idea in American history, expounded by Professor Turner. It is, however, a mistake, in the reviewer's opinion, to see Hebrew prophecy as an attempt to turn back to desert nomadism. The Prophets were far too clear-sighted to try to revive conditions dead beyond recall. That is what the Rechabites sought to do. There is need of a study that would show that the Hebrew Prophets were highly selective and original in their point of view. They held up the desert period as ideal because of its social equalitarianism, and its comparative freedom from the gross immorality of Baalism. They did not, however, adopt the clan divisions characteristic of that early state. On the contrary, they were the prime movers in the creation of a united people out of the hostile tribes, and they favored the centralization of worship as a means to that end. The Prophets deserve to be evaluated in their entirety, as the teachers of an exalted religion, the advocates of social morality, and the founders of Jewish nationalism.

Wallis then proceeds to describe the course of Hebrew history from the conquest of Palestine, through David and Solomon, the division of Ephraim and Judah, until their ultimate destruction in the eighth and sixth centuries respectively. He has occasion to formulate many striking ideas on the struggle between the Mishpat, or clan-ethics of social equality maintained by the poorer, left-wing aristocracy, and the Baal usages and ideals upheld by the richer, right-wing aristocracy. Since many of these ideas are novel, the exposition is necessarily argumentative in large part. His description of tribal conditions in Deborah's time and his interpretation of Hosea's prophecy that God

would one day be called not *baali,* but *ishi* by Israel, are examples of his happier insights.

IV

Unfortunately, the work suffers from several drawbacks. Wallis contends that the social struggle was waged between the two wings of the Hebrew aristocracy, but that the majority of the population were slaves. Yet nowhere is an attempt made to establish the proportion of slaves on a statistical basis.

In addition, the author does not utilize cognate Biblical sciences as a check on his theories. Considering the importance of words like *baal* and *ish* in his theory, a more thorough-going philological study was much to be desired.

The greatest drawback, however, is the author's complete lack of concern for the findings of archaeology, which, after popular exaggerations are discounted, nevertheless serve to create a new respect for the historical reliability of Biblical writers. Wallis denies any historical basis to Genesis and Exodus, and sees all the incidents and personages as reflections of later situations, such as tribal conflicts, economic lashes or political alignments. He engages wholesale in a unique kind of sociological Midrash. Thus he contends that "Joseph moves entirely in the atmosphere of myth" and was created by the imagination of the Prophets, in order to illustrate "the land reformer," who opposes the expropriation of the peasants, and confirms them in their holdings, by setting up a tax of only 20 percent of the yield! That Joseph's activities are exhibited as an example of social justice, is, to say the least, highly novel. It certainly seems more plausible to assume that Joseph is pictured as a loyal and sagacious servant of the Crown, in order to present the background for Egyptian slavery and the Exodus. Moreover, modern studies have shown that there is much that is authentically Egyptian in the Joseph narratives, and archaeology has supplied many links of evidence that make Joseph credible. Even the name Joseph-el has been discovered as a place-name in the period.

This propensity to sociological Midrash is carried on in the case of Moses, who, Wallis says, may have some slight basis in real fact, but is essentially a reflection of Elijah. Wallis even has recourse to a species of Philonian allegory. The crossing of the Red Sea is a symbolic myth, "combining in a single picture the two motives of emancipation from slavery and release from the grip of a heartless foreign power by passing through a sea of trouble to safety on the shores beyond."

Because Wallis ignores other than purely sociological factors, he is sometimes compelled to adopt untenable views. Thus he insists that Jerusalem opposed the Deuteronomic code found in Josiah's day, which contradicts all our evidence, and he is compelled to add: "That a small force like Josiah's would fling itself against a powerful military host, such as the one coming up from Egypt, seems incredible." In a paper published elsewhere, the reviewer has attempted to show that the battle is thoroughly understandable in terms of the economic and religious divisions in Judah. So, too, Wallis avers that the freeing of the slaves during the siege of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day was an attempt to win God's favor. It seems to have been a practical war-measure designed to increase the manpower required for the defense of the city.

V

These detailed criticisms are an index of the suggestive and valuable character of the work. Both in his approach and underlying thesis, the author has made a distinct contribution to Biblical history and to our understanding of the social background of Judaism. He emphasizes that while among other peoples a radical revolt against the state was treason against religion, the peculiar Hebrew evolution led Israel's thinkers to dramatize divinity on the side of social justice. Because of this unique quality, the history of Israel possesses universal significance for the future of religion and society as a whole.